



THE BOLLYWOOD “BRAND-WAGON”: PRODUCT PLACEMENT STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Product placement in Bollywood is not new. It has its roots long back in the 1940's but only after 2004 it got recognition. Indian audiences in these days are exposed to a lot of media clutter and product placement may help in breaking that clutter. It even helps in eliminating the loss which marketers have to bear because of the zipping and zapping effect. This paper tries to explain the advent of product placement in Bollywood industry. A lot has been talked about placement as a strategy but is it equally effective? Is the audience aware and can comprehend the same? A focus group study of small number of participants has been done and they being studied on the awareness and recall score. The researcher has tried to seek out the brands and movies which respondents could recall (Unaided), the plot connection, prominence and product integration in that scene recalled. It is concluded that a brand when associated with a celebrity gains good recall. The brand placed should be well connected with the plot and should be prominent if the marketers want his placement to be remembered over a period of time but prominence can affect attitude negatively. Same is the case with the placement strategy. Explicit placements are remembered over implicit placements but when it comes to liking, the scene and the plot got appreciation where the brands were placed implicitly, doesn't hindering the flow and rationality of the scene.

KEYWORDS: Product placement, Prominence, Plot connection, Recall.

Introduction:

Today's competitive market needs an extra ounce to reach and captivate customers. Marketers need to formulate “the” strategy to keep to the competitors away. It always been difficult for them to operate in such an environment where there is a huge pool of sellers chasing few customers. The market place has shrunk to accommodate a wide variety of customers. To keep that bond with a customers calls for creative and innovative strategies when it comes to promoting a product. With the advent of technology it has become easier to communicate or promote a brand with the use of varied media available like print and electronic. Product placement or brand placement is one such electronic medium which is included in Television shows, movies, songs, games etc. Product placement has always been a major promotion tool and it has its roots long back in the 1960's. Only in 1990 it got recognized and influence felt. This study aims to provide a theoretical framework on how product placement has evolved over time. The changes sought from 1960's till date and what needs to be done in the near future so as to increase the impact of this promotional tool.

Product placement in Bollywood: Evolution over time

In India, movies have always been a fascination. The people here doesn't watch it but experience each and every bit of it, that's the reason nowadays movies are reaping huge profits and there has been of emergence of clubs like 100 crore or 200 crore. This is the potential and marketers have always tried to explore it. Films are an integral part which is evident from the iconic status that film stars experience. The Indian film industry which is more than 100 years old is making more than 1000 films annually. The films are categorized into two types commercial and art films, tele films and special effect films in the emerging genres. Either the film is made for masses or for the niche audience, film producers always try to leverage upon the emotional and psychological value attached with the movie by making use of in-film placements. Product placement in Bollywood has its roots from early 1960's. From the movie, Bobby (1973) to the movie KI & KA (2016), product placement in Indian cinema has gone a step forward and embarked upon new and innovative strategies to cater to the changing audience.

Placement Integrated in Bollywood Movies

Product placement has a instance in 1967 movie, “An evening in Paris” in which the protagonist was seen sipping Coke from a 200 ml bottle so as to make sure that the logo was visible. In the blockbuster movie “Bobby” from 1973, Rajdoot motorbike from royal enfield was launched. A scene was shot in Benzer stores of Mumbai on the Main actress in the flick “Prem Diwane” wherein a bunch of people not related to the movie are seen carrying the benzer bags in a scene. Coca-cola & McDonald happens to be an aggressive user of product placement in movies. In the movie “Love ke Liye saala kuch bhi karega” the lead actor Hrithik Roshan is seen strategically holding a ball with Mac 'M' embossed on it. In the same movie the actress is seen explicitly saying that she consumes only Dominos Pizza & Diet Coke. In the movie “Kaho na Pyaar hai”, Hrithik Roshan mentions McDonalds Burger in a scene explicitly. The placements of McDonalds and Coke have always been very explicit and prominent making the viewer expose and aids recall even after a prolonged duration. “Coke” got a huge recognition with the movie “Taal” where the two main leads Aishwarya Rai & Akshay Khanna are shown sipping coke alternately. The scene got a tremendous

response & acceptance amongst the youngsters and this helped coke getting recognition and recall at the time of purchase. Some placements are so well integrated in the plot that it enhances the flow of the plot like the one in “Piku”. “Kayam churn” made an agreement with the film's producer for product promotion after getting aware of the storyline that revolves around an aged irritating person who is suffering from acute constipation. It is not new nowadays to see marketers leverage upon such solid opportunity in which the brand perfectly fits the storyline and the plot connection is concrete. Take an example of the film “Mere Dad ki Maruti” in which the plot revolves around “Maruti Ertiga” which was first launched by such placement. It was so well connected that eventually lead to higher brand awareness which is required at the introduction stage of a new product. The latest movie cluttered with a lot of product placements is Ki&KA released in 2016. A radical marketing strategy implemented, it had more than 15 product placements like marico, Lakme, Vistara, Basmati rice, etc. Saffola taking the major share as the protagonist is shown working as the marketing manager for the brand. It has leveraged upon both plot connection and prominence than subtle placements.

Research Methodology

A focus group study of 20 college going students within the age group of 22-27 was conducted. The questions were open ended wherein the major idea of the researcher was to find out whether the respondents are aware of product placement as a strategy and which placement they are able to recall (Unaided). No hints were provided so as to eliminate the influence of extraneous factors. The respondents were also asked which, according to them, the worst kind of placement is and the reasons were sought for both good and bad placement. The focus group was free to give their responses irrespective of the time a movie was released (old or recent). The only objective was to find out which placement is recalled the most so as to infer the best strategy.

Result & Discussion

All the twenty respondents in the group were aware about product placements being used by marketers in movies. The brands recalled were Saffola in Ki&Ka, Nokia Lumia in Chennai Express, Kayam Churn in Piku, LIC in cheeni kum, Make my trip in yeh jawani hai deewan, Bournvita in Koi mil gaya, Complian in Mere Brother ki Dulhan, Apple desktop in Dil Dhadakne Do, TagHeur in Om-Shanti Om, Maruti Ertiga in Mere Dad ki Maruti, Volvo & Airtel in 3-Idiots, Zandu Balm in Dabang, Rayban in Dabang & so on. See (Table 1.1). Nokia Lumia, Bournvita, Kayam churn & complain were considered as boring and not so well connected to the plot. It seemed as if the brands were forced into the scene only for the visibility purpose. These placements were prominent and explicit. On the other side, Makemytrip.com, Audi, Canon, Volvo SUV & Maruti Ertiga was considered to be well placed and effective. The recall score (ref. Table 1.1) for integrated explicit placement strategy is higher than implicit placement, that means, if a brand is explicitly mentioned in a plot there will be higher recall and recognition. On the contrary it can be seen that implicit placement strategy is more preferred than explicit as the respondent thinks that these placements have plot connectedness and does not disrupt flow of the scene.

Table 1.1 Unaided Brand Recall

Brands	Movie	Placement Strategy	Recalled by
Saffola	Ki& Ka	Integrated explicit	10
Nokia Lumia	Chennai Express	Integrated explicit	8
Kayam Churn	Piku	Integrated explicit	7
Make my trip	yeh jawani hai deewani	Implicit placement	6
Bournvita	Koi mil gaya	Integrated explicit	15
Complan	Mere Brother ki Dulhan	Integrated explicit	1
Apple desktop	Dil Dhadakne Do	Implicit placement	1
TagHeur	Om-Shanti Om	Implicit placement	1
Maruti Ertiga	Mere Dad ki Maruti	Integrated explicit	9
Volvo	3-Idiots	Implicit placement	10
Zandu Balm	Dabbang	Integrated explicit	15
Rayban	Dabbang	Implicit placement	5
Lenovo Laptop	Bodyguard	Implicit placement	4
Audi	Bodyguard	Implicit placement	8
Coca-cola	Dhoom	Implicit placement	6
Canon	Jab tak hai jaan	Implicit placement	9
Discovery channel	Jab tak hai jaan	Integrated explicit	12
Manali	yeh jawani hai deewani	Integrated explicit	11
Mahindra bike	3-Idiots	Implicit placement	10
Sunsilk	2-states	Implicit placement	11
Verve magazine	Dostana	Implicit placement	6
Fevicol	Dabbang2	Integrated explicit	15
Lo'real	Aisha	Implicit placement	3

Table 1.2 Good and Bad placement integration

Bad Placement		Good Placement	
Brands	Movie	Brands	Movie
Nokia Lumia	Chennai Express	Make my trip	yeh jawani hai deewani
Bournvita	Koi mil gaya	Volvo	3-Idiots
Kayam Churn	Piku	Audi	Bodyguard
Complan	Mere Brother ki Dulhan	Canon	Jab tak hai jaan
		Maruti Ertiga	Mere Dad ki Maruti

Table 1.3 Placement Integrated in the movie scene

Brands	Movie	How brand was placed
Saffola	Ki& Ka	The protagonist Kareena Kapoor is featured working as the marketing manager for Saffola
Nokia Lumia	Chennai Express	Shahrukh Khan is calling someone when the actress asks for his phone then he incorporates the features, price, benefits of the phone like a mini advertisement for almost 15 seconds
Kayam Churn	Piku	Amitabh Bachchan suffering from constipation is a regular consumer
Make my trip	yeh jawani hai deewani	Deepika Padukone is shown searching for the information on tour to Manali sponsored by makemytrip.com
Bournvita	Koi mil gaya	Hrithik Roshan asks for Bournvita and explicitly tells the benefits of drinking it
Complan	Mere Brother ki Dulhan	Katrina Kaif in a funny plot tries hiding self in burkha when a person asks how come your height increased she replies saying I am a complain girl
Apple desktop	Dil Dhadakne Do	The actor is featured using it in a scene
TagHeur	Om-Shanti Om	Shahrukh Khan in a scene is drunk & sitting below a billboard of TagHeur, him as the endorser. The billboard is zoomed in to clearly make the placement visible
Maruti Ertiga	Mere Dad ki Maruti	The whole film revolves around the car
Volvo	3-Idiots	The actors are shown driving it when they start hunting for Amir Khan
Zandu Balm	Dabbang	The brand is integrated in the song
Rayban	Dabbang	Shown in the plot, the actor using it
Lenovo Laptop	Bodyguard	Kareena Kapoor, management student, from Symbiosis is shown using the laptop
Audi	Bodyguard	Salman Khan, the bodyguard, of Kareena Kapoor uses it
Coca-cola	Dhoom	Aishwarya Rai, in the climax, working for a restaurant asks the customers whether they would like to have coke
Canon	Jab tak hai jaan	Being a travel guide she is carrying Canon camera for the shoot
Discovery channel	Jab tak hai jaan	Anushka Sharma is working as travel guide for Discovery Channel
Manali	yeh jawani hai deewani	The actor goes on a trip to Manali
Mahindra bike	3-Idiots	Sharman Joshi's father's health gets deteriorated, Amir Khan & Kareena Kapoor takes him to hospital on it easily avoiding the traffic and reaching on time
Sunsilk	2-states	Alia Bhatt after completing her MBA from IIM is placed in SunsilK
Verve magazine	Dostana	Priyanka Chopra, fashion designer, is working for Verve
Fevicol	Dabbang2	The brand is integrated in the song
Lo'real	Aisha	Sonam Kapoor, fashionista, is shown as a brand loyal user of L'Oréal Paris

Conclusion

For brand recall, it is very important that the placement is prominent and connected to the plot. Familiarity with the brand is also an important factor as recall will be higher for those brands which viewers are well aware of. A well connected brand not only helps in brand recall but also influences the viewers' attitude positively. Subtle placement is preferable over prominent placement. Prominence, no doubt, increases the chance that it will be recalled but it impacts the attitude of the viewers as sometimes it comes as a hindrance in the flow of the movie.